

Going to the 'mall' is a weekend affair

Duxbury has its own favorite shopping center

By Debra Filman
MPG Newspapers

DUXBURY – Clutter surrounds only two or three small tables amidst the rocks and dirt.

Old toys, old suitcases, and old crutches line them.

Two men struggle to take a fuzzy old sofa out of their truck.

The key word is "old."

The odd assortment of items, probably once cherished, have been discarded. They sit, haphazardly mixed together by scavengers and gravity.

It is a Wednesday morning at the Duxbury Mall, which is not like any mall you've ever seen. This small area of the transfer station is a free-for-all. Literally. In lieu of throwing them away, residents can leave still-usable items for their neighbors to snatch up.

Though the mall seems fairly in order, that isn't always true according to David Elliott, who minds the mall that often becomes a mess.

Open every week from Wednesday to Sunday (8 a.m. to 4 p.m.), it is a different story on Sunday.

"The whole town is here on Sunday," Elliott said. "I see everyone and I recognize people, so I know if they aren't residents."

Only Duxbury residents are permitted to use the mall, just like the rest of the transfer station. Other towns have discontinued such a practice, Elliott said.

"Took 3½ hours to clean this place up this morning," he said.

He filled two six-ton Dumpsters with the

debris, he said.

The mall is cleaned only once a week now, but in the recent past was cleared out daily.

"But the town got too many complaints when we cleared it out daily," he said.

Department of Public Works director Tom Daley said he'd received several calls about the clean-up policy.

Daley said he's since instructed his employees to leave items for a full week.

"We were just trying to keep things clean and safe," he said. "You know how some people say one man's trash is another man's treasure? Well, the opposite is also true."

People were leaving old couches that had been left out in the rain, he said, and other items that weren't sanitary.

Elliott said other items that cannot be left are mattresses, food, or anything that is broken.

"We don't want stuff that isn't going to leave here," he said. "Someone left me a whole chicken dinner the other day. That's just laziness."

It seems all the goods have a good chance of finding new homes. A stream of cars ebb and flow, pulling in and out throughout the day.

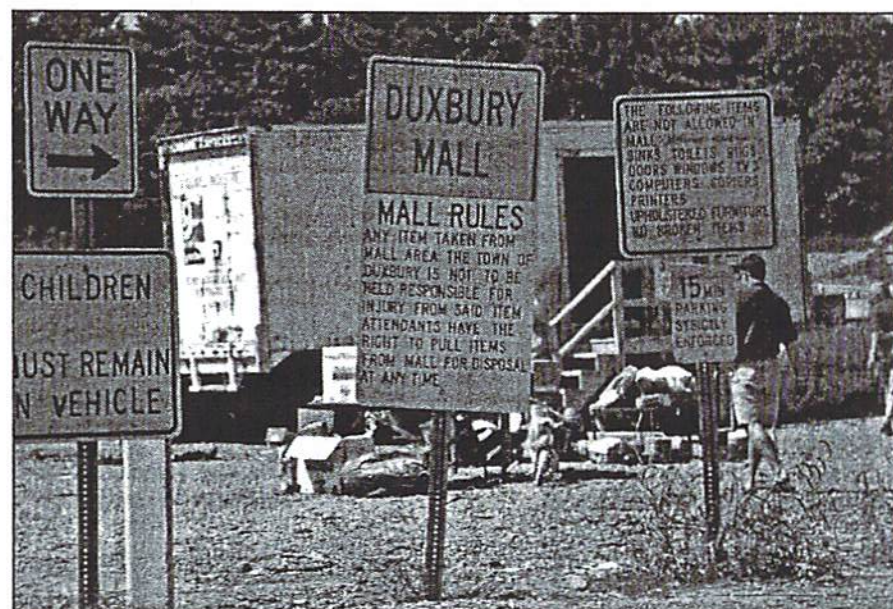
Some residents reach for the obvious goods – old dishes or vases – but others peruse until they find something out of the ordinary.

"Once, my husband found a Beatles 'White' album still in cellophane," resident Susan Fallon said. "I've found Royal Doulton dishes before."

Elliott has found stranger items over the 12 years since the mall was created.

"I found a handgun once, and then there was an airline survival raft. Who has one of those?" he asked incredulously.

"It was no bigger than this," he said gesturing the size of a small moving box. "It still had



Staff photo/Susan Haney

Such a deal! The Duxbury Mall is a hit at the transfer station.

the pull cord, rations, a Swiss army knife, and a flare gun, which I took out."

More surprising than having someone drop off the raft, Elliott said, is someone taking it.

"I told them to cut the wire because when you put that in water, it sends a signal to the coast guard," Elliott said.

Across the way from the mall is a trailer that was abandoned at Chandler School after renovations were done. The DPW towed it to the transfer station, gutted it, and put in shelves. Now, its known as the Duxbury Book Exchange.

That is Al Wills' domain. He comes to find books for himself there among the masses of texts, but also comes to help out. Wills volun-

teers, putting books, puzzles and records in decent order.

Music always plays in the trailer, and people search not only for trashy beach reads and classics like Tolstoy and Fitzgerald, but also for rare records. Looking up at a framed picture of the famous sitcom character, Kramer, residents can search through the piles. Joan Baez sits on top.

"Everyone comes here looking for Beatles stuff," Wills said, stacking a pile of records on the floor.

He pulls one out of the stack and laughs when it turns out to be a Massachusetts school marching band album.

"Oh well," he said.